

## **Senate Bill No. 346**

### **CHAPTER 658**

An act to amend Section 10850 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services.

[Approved by Governor October 8, 2013. Filed with  
Secretary of State October 8, 2013.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SB 346, Beall. Public social services: records.

Existing law establishes various public social services programs to provide for protection, care, and assistance to the people of the state in need of those services, by providing appropriate aid and services to the needy and distressed. Counties are responsible for administering some of these programs, such as CalWORKs, CalFresh, and the Medically Indigent Services Program or the County Medical Services Program. Existing law, in this regard, and with some exceptions, requires all applications and records concerning any individual made or kept by any public officer or agency in connection with the administration of public social services for which grants-in-aid are received by this state from the federal government be kept confidential, and authorizes a county welfare department in the state to release lists of applicants for, or recipients of, public social services to any other county welfare department or the State Department of Social Services, as specified.

This bill would include in the definition of public social services publicly funded health care services administered or supervised by the department or the State Department of Health Care Services, except as specified. The bill would state that this provision clarifies existing law.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. Section 10850 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

10850. (a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, all applications and records concerning any individual made or kept by any public officer or agency in connection with the administration of any provision of this code relating to any form of public social services for which grants-in-aid are received by this state from the United States government shall be confidential, and shall not be open to examination for any purpose not directly connected with the administration of that program, or any investigation, prosecution, or criminal or civil proceeding conducted in connection with the administration of that program. The disclosure of any

information that identifies by name or address any applicant for or recipient of these grants-in-aid to any committee or legislative body is prohibited, except as provided in subdivision (b).

(b) Except as otherwise provided in this section, no person shall publish or disclose or permit or cause to be published or disclosed any list of persons receiving public social services. Any county welfare department in this state may release lists of applicants for, or recipients of, public social services, to any other county welfare department or the State Department of Social Services, and these lists or any other records shall be released when requested by any county welfare department or the State Department of Social Services. These lists or other records shall only be used for purposes directly connected with the administration of public social services. Except for those purposes, no person shall publish, disclose, or use or permit or cause to be published, disclosed, or used any confidential information pertaining to an applicant or recipient.

(c) Any county welfare department and the State Department of Social Services shall provide any governmental entity that is authorized by law to conduct an audit or similar activity in connection with the administration of public social services, including any committee or legislative body so authorized, with access to any public social service applications and records described in subdivision (a) to the extent of the authorization. Those committees, legislative bodies, and other entities may only request or use these records for the purpose of investigating the administration of public social services, and shall not disclose the identity of any applicant or recipient except in the case of a criminal or civil proceeding conducted in connection with the administration of public social services.

(d) This section shall not prohibit the furnishing of this information to other public agencies to the extent required for verifying eligibility or for other purposes directly connected with the administration of public social services, or to county superintendents of schools or superintendents of school districts only as necessary for the administration of federally assisted programs providing assistance in cash or in-kind or services directly to individuals on the basis of need. Any person knowingly and intentionally violating this subdivision is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(e) In the context of a petition for the appointment of a conservator for a person who is receiving or has received aid from a public agency, as indicated above, or in the context of a criminal prosecution for a violation of Section 368 of the Penal Code both of the following shall apply:

(1) An adult protective services employee or ombudsman may answer truthfully at any proceeding related to the petition or prosecution, when asked if he or she is aware of information that he or she believes is related to the legal mental capacity of that aid recipient or the need for a conservatorship for that aid recipient. If the adult protective services employee or ombudsman states that he or she is aware of such information, the court may order the adult protective services employee or ombudsman to testify about his or her observations and to disclose all relevant agency records.

(2) The court may order the adult protective services employee or ombudsman to testify about his or her observations and to disclose any relevant agency records if the court has other independent reason to believe that the adult protective services employee or ombudsman has information that would facilitate the resolution of the matter.

(f) The State Department of Social Services may make rules and regulations governing the custody, use, and preservation of all records, papers, files, and communications pertaining to the administration of the laws relating to public social services under their jurisdiction. The rules and regulations shall be binding on all departments, officials and employees of the state, or of any political subdivision of the state and may provide for giving information to or exchanging information with agencies, public or political subdivisions of the state, and may provide for giving information to or exchanging information with agencies, public or private, that are engaged in planning, providing, or securing social services for or on behalf of recipients or applicants; and for making case records available for research purposes, provided that making these case records available will not result in the disclosure of the identity of applicants for or recipients of public social services and will not disclose any personal information in a manner that would link the information disclosed to the individual to whom it pertains, unless the department has complied with subdivision (t) of Section 1798.24 of the Civil Code.

(g) Any person, including every public officer and employee, who knowingly secures or possesses, other than in the course of official duty, an official list or a list compiled from official sources, published or disclosed in violation of this section, of persons who have applied for or who have been granted any form of public social services for which state or federal funds are made available to the counties is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(h) This section shall not be construed to prohibit an employee of a county welfare department from disclosing confidential information concerning a public social services applicant or recipient to a state or local law enforcement agency investigating or gathering information regarding a criminal act committed in a welfare department office, a criminal act against any county or state welfare worker, or any criminal act witnessed by any county or state welfare worker while involved in the administration of public social services at any location. Further, this section shall not be construed to prohibit an employee of a county welfare department from disclosing confidential information concerning a public social services applicant or recipient to a state or local law enforcement agency investigating or gathering information regarding a criminal act intentionally committed by the applicant or recipient against any off-duty county or state welfare worker in retaliation for an act performed in the course of the welfare worker's duty when the person committing the offense knows or reasonably should know that the victim is a state or county welfare worker. These criminal acts shall include only those that are in violation of state or local law. Disclosure of confidential information pursuant to this subdivision shall be limited to the applicant's or recipient's name, physical description, and address.

(i) The provisions of this section shall be operative only to the extent permitted by federal law and shall not apply to, but exclude, Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 14000) and Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 14200) of this division, and for which a grant-in-aid is received by this state from the United States government pursuant to Title XIX of the federal Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 1396 et seq.).

(j) (1) Public social services, as defined in Section 10051, includes publicly funded health care services administered or supervised by the department or the State Department of Health Care Services, except that, as used in this section, it does not include the Medi-Cal program. This subdivision does not affect or alter the exclusions contained in subdivision (i) or the confidentiality provisions contained in Section 14100.2.

(2) This subdivision clarifies existing law.